

Disarmament issues theme for Vogel tour

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BONN (Reuters) — Hans-Jochen Vogel, West Germany's Social Democratic (SPD) opposition candidate for chancellor, is to meet President Reagan for talks on disarmament issues in Washington this week.

An SPD spokesman in Bonn said Vogel's three-day visit, starting today, also will include a meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz, who was in Bonn last month.

Vogel is also due in Moscow next week to meet with Soviet leader Yuri Andropov and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Disarmament also will be the main topic then, the SPD spokesman said.

Gromyko will pay an official two-day visit to Bonn on Jan. 16.

West Germany is facing early general elections in March and a key election issue is the prospect of 572 new medium-range missiles due to be installed in Western Europe unless Moscow and Washington agree on arms reduction in Geneva.

In an interview broadcast on West Germany radio, Vogel said he would do everything to fight for an electoral mandate to make deployment superfluous.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl has said he intends to ask voters for a mandate to station the missiles in the country unless the Soviet Union agrees to scrap all its medium-range weapons.

The SPD favors a compromise at Geneva which would avoid deploy-

ment and Vogel said those calling on the superpowers to end the arms race are increasing in number and could no longer be ignored.

"This was one of the reasons I visited the pope in Rome — to thank him for his tireless and persistent efforts in voicing these fears and calling for a peaceful solution," he said.

Asked whether he saw recent Soviet proposals to reduce its nuclear arsenal in Eastern Europe as more than propaganda, Vogel said: "Yes, I presume there is more to them, even if such proposals can always be used to popularize one's own stand."

West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has warned of confusing polemics, propaganda and substance while the Geneva talks were in process.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry in response to the Soviet Union's latest declaration on arms reductions, he said: "It is as necessary to reject polemics directed at the Western position as it is important to use the undeniable substantial progress on the Soviet side."

Genscher added: "A mutual renunciation of land-based medium-range missiles remains the ideal negotiation result for us. Should this be unattainable, everything will have to be done to keep the number of medium-range missiles on the U.S. and Soviet side as low as possible."